

IN THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1 and 14-19 without prejudice or disclaimer, add new claims 21 and 22, and amend the remaining claims as follows.

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended) Machine as in claim 6 [[1]], wherein said thrust means are able to thrust said transverse wire from said first preparation position to said third intermediate pick-up position along a sliding surface.

3. (Previously Presented) Machine as in claim 2, wherein said loading assembly comprises a stop element able to cooperate with said sliding surface to keep said transverse wire on said surface.

4. (Currently Amended) Machine as in claim 9 [[1]], wherein said loading assembly comprises a retaining device defining an insertion seating, made in said first preparation position, wherein said transverse wire is fed by said second feed assembly.

5. (Currently Amended) Machine as in claim 4, for the formation of metal mesh made of metal wires obtained by attaching together a plurality of longitudinal metal wires to a plurality of transverse metal wires, said machine comprising at least:

a first feed assembly able to make said longitudinal wires advance step-wise,

a second feed assembly able to arrange at least one transverse wire at a time in a first preparation position,

a positioning apparatus able to arrange said transverse wire in a second attachment position, and

a welding assembly able to attach said transverse wires to said longitudinal wires,

said positioning apparatus comprising at least a loading assembly comprising a gripping and transfer device, able to locate said transverse wire in said second attachment position, and

thrust means able to take said transverse wire from said first preparation position to a third intermediate pick-up position, near said second attachment position, wherein said transverse wire is picked up by said gripping and transfer device, said thrust means comprising at least a rotary element provided with blade means able to thrust the transverse wire from said first preparation position to said third intermediate pick-up position,

wherein said loading assembly comprises a retaining device,

wherein said retaining device comprises two jaws of which at least one is cyclically movable from a closed position, wherein said movable jaw defines with the other jaw said an insertion seating, to an open position wherein said transverse wire is released to be taken to said third intermediate pick-up position, and

wherein said movable jaw is hinged on the other jaw and has an abutment element cooperating with eccentric means made to rotate by a shaft, the rotation of said eccentric means causing the cyclic movement of said movable jaw from said closed position to said open position and vice versa.

6. (Currently amended) Machine as in claim 5, for the formation of metal mesh made of metal wires obtained by attaching together a plurality of longitudinal metal wires to a plurality of transverse metal wires, said machine comprising at least:

a first feed assembly able to make said longitudinal wires advance step-wise,

a second feed assembly able to arrange at least one transverse wire at a time in a first preparation position,

a positioning apparatus able to arrange said transverse wire in a second attachment position, and

a welding assembly able to attach said transverse wires to said longitudinal wires,

said positioning apparatus comprising at least a loading assembly comprising a gripping and transfer device, able to locate said transverse wire in said second attachment position, and thrust means able to take said transverse wire from said first preparation position to a third intermediate pick-up position, near said second attachment position, wherein said transverse wire is picked up by said gripping and transfer device, said thrust means comprising at least a rotary

element provided with blade means able to thrust the transverse wire from said first preparation position to said third intermediate pick-up position,

wherein said loading assembly comprises a retaining device defining an insertion seating, made in said first preparation position, wherein said transverse wire is fed by said second feed assembly,

wherein said retaining device comprises two jaws of which at least one is cyclically movable from a closed position, wherein said movable jaw defines with the other jaw said insertion seating to an open position wherein said transverse wire is released to be taken to said third intermediate pick-up position, and

wherein said movable jaw is hinged on the other jaw and has an abutment element cooperating with eccentric means made to rotate by a shaft, the rotation of said eccentric means causing the cyclic movement of said movable jaw from said closed position to said open position and vice versa.

7. (Currently Amended) Machine as in claim 5 [1], wherein said gripping and transfer device comprises at least a prehensile member associated with relative movement means able to take said prehensile member cyclically from said third intermediate pick-up position to said second attachment position and vice versa.

8. (Currently Amended) Machine as in claim 9 [[7]], wherein said movement means comprise a rod driven by a relative shaft and connected to slider means sliding on guides and associated with said prehensile member.

9. (Currently Amended) Machine as in claim 7, for the formation of metal mesh made of metal wires obtained by attaching together a plurality of longitudinal metal wires to a plurality of transverse metal wires, said machine comprising at least:

a first feed assembly able to make said longitudinal wires advance step-wise,

a second feed assembly able to arrange at least one transverse wire at a time in a first preparation position,

a positioning apparatus able to arrange said transverse wire in a second attachment position, and

a welding assembly able to attach said transverse wires to said longitudinal wires,

said positioning apparatus comprising at least a loading assembly comprising a gripping and transfer device, able to locate said transverse wire in said second attachment position, and thrust means able to take said transverse wire from said first preparation position to a third intermediate pick-up position, near said second attachment position, wherein said transverse wire is picked up by said gripping and transfer device, said thrust means comprising at least a rotary element provided with blade means able to thrust the transverse wire from said first preparation position to said third intermediate pick-up position,

wherein said gripping and transfer device comprises at least a prehensile member associated with relative movement means able to take said prehensile member cyclically from said third intermediate pick-up position to said second attachment position and vice versa, and

wherein said prehensile member comprises a gripper with two jaws able to open and close elastically, said jaws defining, in their closed condition, a housing seating for said transverse wires.

10. (Previously Presented) Machine as in claim 9, wherein said jaws are shaped with lead-in surfaces, converging and at least partly curved, on which said transverse wires are able to slide to be inserted into and emerge from said housing seating.

11. (Currently Amended) Machine as in claim 9 [[1]], wherein, when said gripper is in said third intermediate pick-up position, said blade means are able to cause said jaws to open due to the effect of the thrust exerted on said transverse wire, allowing said transverse wire to be inserted into said housing seating.

12. (Previously Presented) Machine as in claim 11, wherein said loading assembly comprises a stop element able to retain said transverse wire at least during the step of insertion

into said housing seating, preventing said transverse wire from emerging due to the effect of an excessive thrust by said blade means.

13. (Currently Amended) Machine as in claim 9 [[1]], wherein at least one of said jaws is moveable and the rotation of said rotary [[means]] element and the cyclical movement of said prehensile member and of said movable jaw are managed by a command and control assembly which coordinates them according to at least the drive of said welding assembly.

14-19. (Cancelled)

20. (Currently Amended) Loading assembly for at least a first metal wire, fed in a first preparation position, to be attached to at least a second metal wire in a second attachment position, comprising:

movement means able to take said first wire from said first preparation position to said second attachment position,

wherein said movement means comprise

at least a gripping and transfer device, able to grip said first wire -to locate said first wire in said second attachment position, and

thrust means able to take said first wire from said first preparation position to a third intermediate pick-up position wherein said first wire is picked up by said gripping and transfer device,

wherein said loading assembly comprises a retaining device,

wherein said retaining device comprises two jaws of which at least one is cyclically movable from a closed position, wherein said movable jaw defines with the other jaw an insertion seating, to an open position wherein said transverse wire is released to be taken to said third intermediate pick-up position, and

wherein said movable jaw is hinged on the other jaw and has an abutment element cooperating with eccentric means made to rotate by a shaft, the rotation of said eccentric means

causing the cyclic movement of said movable jaw from said closed position to said open position and vice versa.

21. (New) Loading assembly for at least a first metal wire, fed in a first preparation position, to be attached to at least a second metal wire in a second attachment position, comprising:

movement means able to take said first wire from said first preparation position to said second attachment position,

wherein said movement means comprise

at least a gripping and transfer device, able to grip said first wire -to locate said first wire in said second attachment position, and

thrust means able to take said first wire from said first preparation position to a third intermediate pick-up position wherein said first wire is picked up by said gripping and transfer device,

wherein said gripping and transfer device comprises at least a prehensile member associated with relative movement means able to take said prehensile member cyclically from said third intermediate pick-up position to said second attachment position and vice versa, and

wherein said prehensile member comprises a gripper with two jaws able to open and close elastically, said jaws defining, in their closed condition, a housing seating for said transverse wires.

22. (New) Machine as in claim 5, wherein said jaws are shaped with lead-in surfaces, converging and at least partly curved, on which said transverse wires are able to slide to be inserted into and emerge from said housing seating.